

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS COUNTY OF NEWPORT

The Town Council of the Town of Tiverton, County and State aforesaid held a Special Meeting on Saturday, the 24th day of January 2015 at 9:00 a.m. at the Tiverton Town Hall, 343 Highland Road.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Council President deMedeiros (late arrival), Vice-President Chabot, Councilor Lambert, Councilor Peter Mello, Councilor Pelletier, Councilor Perry and Councilor Sousa.

Town Administrator Matthew Wojcik and Office Clerk Leona Cook were also present.

1. Call To Order:

Vice-President Chabot opened the Special Meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag then called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

2. Overall Discussion and Possible Votes on FY 2015/2016 Budget

Town Administrator Wojcik discussed version control (dates in top corner), milestones. Each Councilor was previously presented with a binder that has more detailed backup for each section. Important to have Department Heads advocate for their services. T/A Wojcik kept the budget at a certain goal, had reduced some items, balanced priorities and kept spending increases to a minimum. President deMedeiros arrived at this time. T/A Wojcik believed it was Council policy to make choices to put items back in the budget. The Budget Committee (BC) Chair has indicated the budget to be a work in progress, need to understand shared goals, fiscal responsibility and the fiscal impact. The budget being discussed today is at a 2.06% increase. Councilor Lambert noted the State requires no greater than a 4% increase. Do not know revenues, questioned how close it would come to the 4%. T/A Wojcik explained the School Committee (SC) budget came in at a 1% increase, reminded the levy is for the full budget. School budget is \$29 million; the Town is \$18 million. Minimize spending after the budget is passed, for the past several years had a modest surplus, do not know if the Town has to make up the entire \$600K. President deMedeiros simplified the explanation, did not tax the people for services last year. Have to tax for this year and last year. Last year had a 1.37% increase, hard to predict what it will be this year. Councilor Lambert wanted to know how much spending could increase to approach the 4% cap. T/A Wojcik has no intention of approaching the cap or asking for a waiver. Decreased non-recurring expenses by retiring the debt on a truck but are on a replacement cycle for equipment. President deMedeiros opined, may not have to replace the entire \$600K.

Sally Black, SC liaison noted the school budget process had many cuts. T/A Wojcik chafed against the idea the Town spends money like bandits, important to show the people how the SC goes through their process. Do not want to filter the feedback from the Police and Fire Chiefs, important for the public to understand how the choices were made. Councilor Pelletier noted some other communities have collectively made decisions to build up the surplus to fund capital improvements. T/A Wojcik noted last year's decision creates a financial challenge. On the Massachusetts municipal website there is a document library with a well thought out plan showing the value of a general fund balance. Has a very serious financial element, if put in place can have very restricted accounts. Councilor Pelletier agreed was easier to do in Massachusetts, like to get to that point. Questioned if a line item could be created for just that. T/A Wojcik noted that takes time, patience and persistence. Resented the notion someone could just throw an idea out to have a zero increase, almost impossible to render services to protect the Town.

President deMedeiros explained the process would be to go line by line in an organized manner, can ask questions as those items come up. Councilor Perry questioned if Treasurer Denise Saurette had looked at all the bonds. T/A Wojcik explained can't do this year, depends on the date. Explained the net number on the library bond, the reimbursement by the State would be \$300k, just showing the net number in the budget. Councilor Sousa questioned whether the library would have a certificate of occupancy in time. Barbara Donnelly, Library Chair, affirmed, the new library would be open this spring. Councilor Sousa wanted to postpone the ambulance replacement, did not think the chassis was worn out, need a better assessment. T/A Wojcik explained, need 2 ambulances, scale the financing that way in case one fails. Councilor Sousa wanted to privatize ambulance services, for snow plowing can hire dozens of contractors or rent one. Same thing with the ambulance service, like to see side by side comparisons. T/A Wojcik noted a good point, but an ambulance service will pass increases on to the customers. Councilor Sousa also noted a private service would not be paying into the state pension. Some discussion on privatizing followed, consensus was a comparison would be good. President deMedeiros requested the T/ A check with other communities to see if they privatize ambulance service. Councilor Pelletier pointed out in essence the Town could be funding the capital improvements of these companies. Councilor Sousa added the fire inspections should be State responsibility; needed to look hard at the options, the Town will not get more State money. Janice Gomes, Senior Center Director commented, the Town provides free ambulance service to residents, some mutual aid companies would bill, could be \$300 or more.

Councilor Chabot recapped, on page 4 the request is to review the cost to privatize, review the air packs for the fire department, find out how many communities privatize and how many do fire inspections. Councilor Pelletier clarified, this was for informational gathering purposes for the budget; questioned what a hotbox was. T/A Wojcik hoped to find enough savings out of the current budget to get one. A hotbox is used to heat the pothole paving mixture properly. Currently put in the bottom of a truck, lose approximately \$450 out of \$900 of the load by not preserving properly, have to go to Providence to get the mixture. Councilor Sousa suggested a truck that heats the mix using the exhaust system or having the DPW work with a private company to deliver the asphalt to them. Councilor Pelletier knew of 2 companies that have a self-contained unit, trying to get the names. Police Chief Thomas Blakey referring to page 5 suggested reducing the Jail Security System request from \$20k to 15k. The Police Department now does e-tickets; print them in the cars, one to the operator, one to the station. Would like to bring in 5 more laptops at \$2,800 each, need to remain in compliance. T/A Wojcik requested the Chief explain in detail the reason to forego \$5,000 for the Jail Security System. Chief Blakey explained, have 2 cameras in each cell, put in plexiglass. Required to have 1 camera, have put in 2, just had re-fixed. The request includes exterior cameras, an upgrade to the front locking system, is a mix of things the Chief wants to do to keep current.

President deMedeiros suggested reviewing the Police Department budget since the Chief was available to answer any questions. Will do the same for the Senior Center and Library budgets. Chief Blakey put in for 2 additional patrol vehicles required to have 2 men per thousand. Parking lot paving not a high priority. The audio & video recording equipment is mandated but not funded by the State, will be asking the State to fund. Chief Blakey, need a public safety complex for police, fire, municipal court and code enforcement. Discussion turned to salaries on page 13, T/A Wojcik explained the salary accounts, costs go up from the prior year as employees move from one step to another, budget for what we expect to pay. Chief Blakey noted this was the current status of the salary accounts. Councilor Perry questioned why no increase for the captain and lieutenants. Chief Blakey explained contractual increases are put in the Future needs account. T/A Wojcik added this contract expires in June so funds are put in the Council's Future Needs account. Different unions have different agreements as far as buy backs if someone retires. As far as AFSCME budgeted different by department heads. Sat down

with the union president regarding pay grades and the budgets, found some people at blended rates. Budgeted for longevity salary, referred back to the contract. Chief Blakey explained one CCO was classified as a clerk saving \$4,744. Increased the overtime budget by \$10,000. Do background checks, implemented for the Fire department, costs money, should split with Fire Department. T/A Wojcik wanted the record to show after an extensive process the Town would have hired 2 individuals but were eliminated on the basis of background checks; provides a valuable service. The Town has 31 officers including the Chief. T/A Wojcik explained for insurance and pension the two Chiefs are not part of the municipal group.

T/A Wojcik will be providing a recommendation of the Fire Chief contract, a memorandum of understanding to reflect what the Chief is paid, what is in the contract. Benefits need to be reflected in the contract including clothing allowance. Councilor Perry questioned why the shift differentials, out of rank and holiday pay did not reflect an increase. T/A Wojcik explained those will show up in the future needs account. Chief Blakey noted the Holiday Pay line item should be increased by \$587.42 and the Longevity line item should be reduced by \$401.01. Members qualify and train more than necessary. Chief Blakey started an explorer program, dealing with mental illness issues, like to get ahead of it. State Education mandated line item should be \$48,516, currently underfunded. President deMedeiros made this as a special meeting just in case the Council wanted to take any votes. Chief Blakey did not see any employees leaving at this time. In-service Training, paid at regular time was increased for employees in progress to reach a higher step. Chief Blakey preferred to be ahead of the curve in this area. Several items in the Chief's budget are contractual like Clothing Allowance, Uniform or Equipment Replacement. T/A Wojcik pointed out the Council binders also had 5 year averages and related backup information.

Requested increased amounts for gas and oil, electricity even though prices locked in on certain items for 3 years. Councilor Pelletier noted CODE RED System had an account number as NEW. The cost of electricity at the Hambly Road transmitter will be taken over by Chief Blakey. Telephones are level funded. T/A Wojcik is pursuing every last option regarding phone lines, looking into consolidating fax lines. Closed 3 lines with the closing of the Community Center, paying for the provision of the line. The Clerk's office has a Verizon line for elections. Councilor Perry noted Town Sergeant Randy Costa, who works as an IT Director, was willing to work with the T/A to look at all communications in the Town. Chief Blakey cut 10% from all office supplies. Regarding software maintenance T/A Wojcik commented on not getting the full efficiency. Councilor Pelletier noted the Town operates under one software system; the infrastructure system has no umbrella, no cohesive strategy. Chief Blakey discussed Animal Control section of the budget, have an agenda request to go out for bids for animal shelter services. The salary for the Animal Control Officer should be 45,483.20, a classification issue. There are 6 animal cages at Sakonnet Vet; they charge \$12.25 per cage. New vendor at Sakonnet Vet, cost may go up. Have spoken to Bristol about using their facility, RI State law says cannot go across the border. Would be an inconvenience for citizens to go to Bristol; often have to pay overtime to go over the bridge. Can set up a temporary shelter at the Police Station, a lot of rules and regulations. Code Red is now in the Police Department budget is worth the money. Have not used this service yet. T/ A Wojcik explained this pays for the database, can be done on a spot basis, very fast. Messages can be pre-recorded, call groups are set up. Councilor Souza thought this could be done in house by sending text messages. Councilor Chabot, due to a prior commitment left the meeting at this time. Chief Blakey explained the service is so sophisticated you would get a text if say you were in Maine. It is a quality of life, a beneficial service for the Town.

Senior Center Director Janice Gomes answered questions regarding the Senior Center budget. Discussion followed regarding the request to replace windows for \$32k. Councilor Sousa suggested

doing in house, half the windows at a time. Ms. Gomes was waiting for the recently done energy audit report. Councilor Perry suggested contacting National Grid. T/A Wojcik agreed, could be done in house, benefit of changing all at once is energy savings. An energy audit was done by RISE, a vendor of National Grid. Councilor Pelletier noted an alternative would be air tight sealed double paned that have a higher rating value that allow for easy removal. Many vendors offer these types, not terribly expensive, custom made. Will try to get a list of vendors and prices. President deMedeiros opined, was a very good budget, not many increases. Senior Center Director services, T/A budget reflect the percentage increase from last year. Councilor Pelletier suggested taking all the department head salaries for up to a certain percentage and put in a potential raise pool. T/A Wojcik intended to create something similar, each department is different. Inherited this way of presenting the budget, like to tie salary increase to goals and performance. Councilor Perry added the Budget Committee was looking at just having a bottom line number for all departments. Councilor Pelletier explained there could be a resolution for that, recalled one year a number of transfers from department to department falling under the \$2,500 threshold. Budgeted for positions and line items, last year Councilor Pelletier composed a list of 5 year average of actuals. Councilor Sousa questioned how much is spent on building maintenance. T/A Wojcik referred the Councilor to the Budget binder that has the detailed backup. Ms. Gomes noted a \$1,500 dollar increase in activities, have picked up a yoga class. Also receive in class donations that turn back approximately \$8,000 per year. T/ A Wojcik noted the Senior Center has established a model, is a net positive to the Town for rendering services.

T/A Wojcik explained the Library Services is a bottom line presentation, received a request for \$586,115, T/A Wojcik submitted \$525,000. Barbara Donnelly, Chair of the Library Trustees and Ann Grealish-Rust, Director of Library Services noted the request was actually \$581,516. The larger increase reflects a larger building. A Budget Draft FY 16 for Library Services was handed out to the Council listing various expenditures and revenues. President deMedeiros noted the T/A cut the library request by \$55k, helpful to know about the various increases. T/ A Wojcik explained, is a new building will have some operation increases, no other buildings in Town get the same type of support. Would like to move the custodian up to 40 hours, will also need some help from the library staff. Councilor Sousa suggested the staff pitch in to help clean. Mrs. Donnelly pointed out the staff can keep their own desk areas clean but there are several public rooms including the bathrooms. Councilor Sousa opined this is a grant from the Town to the Library; the Town lets them use the building. Mrs. Donnelly disagreed; Lydia Essex money built the library. In 1937, at a Town meeting it was voted to accept her grant of money to build a public library for the Town. Councilor Lambert noted the Town has a legal obligation by State law to maintain a library. Ms. Grealish-Rust explained because of library laws the T/A has no control over the library budget. Mrs. Donnelly explained the only difference is this is a Town department, the administration of the staff and the budget is separate from the T/A.

The electricity budget is estimated based on the engineers proposed usage multiplied by the current rate. The T/A may be able to tweak the library request of \$580 and the T/A's proposed \$525k recommendation. Mrs. Donnelly believed the budget should be more than the \$525, Councilor Sousa felt comfortable with the number from the T/A to forward to the Budget Committee. The T/A used 10%, hoping to get more backup. President deMedeiros believed the numbers could be reduced, will have to come back before the Council, thanked them for coming to discuss their budget request. Councilor Pelletier requested further discussion on the Future Needs account, Planner, Police Pension, Unfunded Liability and Recreation. President deMedeiros noted the Solicitor was working on a resolution to fund field maintenance. The Administrator requested being present for any discussion on the Recreation budget. The T/A has discussed the budget with them, wants Recreation to be a revenue stream. Clubs are used to paying fees, community based organizations are not. Councilor Peter Mello discussed the On Site Wastewater budget, wanted to know what is going on with Town inspections.

T/A Wojcik was looking to have a memorandum of understanding with the new district or need to have a private vendor, people need to be brought into compliance. There is no validity to the Tiverton Wastewater District if no one ties in. Will be talking to the new Fall River mayor about reducing betterment fees. The Administrator will be out of town on February 7 but the Council could still have the DPW Director, Fire Chief, Tax Collector and Tax Assessor answer questions regarding those budgets. Will be kept as special meetings for the possibility of Council votes. President deMedeiros is putting the budget on every agenda just in case the Council needs to vote. Reminded everyone to wear purple for the meeting on Monday, January 26. T/A Wojcik requested the Council not schedule a meeting on February 14 without first talking to him.

3. ADJOURNMENT:

Councilor Pelletier motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Sousa, passed unanimously.

The Special Meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

A True Copy.

ATTEST: _____

Nancy L. Mello, Town Clerk